

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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USELMLO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BERLIN 249

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, WB, GE

SUBJECT: TRANSIT ROUTE PROBLEMS

REF: BERLIN 214, BONN 1778, BONN 1797, BONN 1877

1. GOVERNING MAYOR SCHUETZ AND OTHER SENAT OFFICIALS
CONTINUE PUBLICLY TO PLAY DOWN MOST RECENT REPORTS
OF DIFFICULTIES ON TRANSIT ROUTES WHILE PRIVATELY
SEEKING TO CONVINCE BONN TO TAKE FIRM POSITION IN
DISCUSSIONS WITH GDR. NOW THAT ISSUE SEEMS TO HAVE
BECOME SUBJECT OF CDU-SPD POLITICAL DEBATE IN BONN
IT IS MORE DIFFICULT FOR SCHUETZ TO DAMPEN PUBLIC REACTION.
BERLIN PRESS, PARTICULARLY SPRINGER, CONTINUES TO
SPOTLIGHT ISSUE, AND GAUS'S STATEMENT THAT HE ACCEPTED
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GDR EXPLANATION HAS NOT MADE SCHUETZ'S TASK EASIER.

2. IN COUNTERATTACK AGAINST BAVARIAN INTERIOR MINISTER'S CHARGE THAT LAST WEEKEND'S INCIDENTS WERE MORE SERIOUS THAN GOVERNMENT CLAIMED, SCHUETZ CALLED FOR UNIFORM PROCEDURES IN REPORTING INCIDENTS ON TRANSIT ROUTES. SCHUETZ STATED THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO AVOID HAVING THE SAME CONDITIONS JUDGED DIFFERENTLY IN BAVARIA, FOR EXAMPLE, THAN IN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN OR BERLIN. HE SAID TRANSIT ROUTES WERE TOO IMPORTANT TO BECOME OBJECT OF A POLITICAL GAME.

3. EXPERIENCE OVER PAST TWO WEEKENDS ALSO EXPOSED TO ALLIED MISSIONS PROBLEM OF OBTAINING ACCURATE AND TIMELY INFORMATION ABOUT TRANSIT-ROUTE INCIDENTS. THE COMMANDANTS AND MINISTERS DISCUSSED THIS PROBLEM WITH GOVERNING MAYOR AND WE HAVE FOLLOWED UP WITH SENAT CHANCELLERY, REMINDING SENAT OF 1971 INSTRUCTION TO POLICE AND CUSTOMS OFFICIALS ON MECHANICS OF REPORTING INCIDENTS. WE ALSO DISCUSSED PROBLEM OF DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN "NORMAL" GDR CHECKS FOR SPEEDING, DRUNKEN DRIVING, ETC., AND GENUINE HARASSMENT, AND REQUESTED SENAT TO PROVIDE POLICE AND CUSTOMS VIEWS ON "NORMAL" GDR TRAFFIC-SAFETY CONTROLS. SENAT OFFICIAL SAID PART OF DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING ACCURATE INFORMATION WAS THAT FRG OFFICE DEALING WITH TRANSIT-COMMISSION MATTERS WAS UNDERSTAFFED AND LACKED OFFICIALS WITH ADMINISTRATIVE ABILITY. MOREOVER, IF TRAVELERS AT WEST GERMAN AND WEST BERLIN CHECK POINTS WERE HELD UP TO OBTAIN DETAILED INFORMATION, THAT BY ITSELF COULD HINDER TRAFFIC FLOW.

4. COMMENT: INHERENT AMBIGUITY OF LOW-LEVEL GDR HARASSMENT ON TRANSIT ROUTES PRESENTS REAL PROBLEM IN DETERMINING APPROPRIATE RESPONSES. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE BEST APPROACH IS TO AVOID OVER-REACTING AND FOR FRG TO TAKE REASONABLE BUT FIRM POSITION WITH GDR THAT SUCH ACTIONS, WHETHER THEY BE IN NAME OF MANHUNTS OR TRAFFIC SAFETY, DAMAGE TRANSIT AGREEMENT, WHICH IS UNACCEPTABLE.

5. USCOB CONCURS.KLEIN
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